

**SELECT BOARD AGENDA**  
Monday, March 23, 2009 – 6:30 p.m.  
Town Room, Town Hall

**DRAFT**

**MINUTES**

**Call to order:**

Meeting was called to order by Ms. O’Keeffe at 6:30 p.m.

**Attendance:**

Present: Stephanie O’Keeffe (Chair), Alisa Brewer, Aaron Hayden (Clerk), Diana Stein, Gerry Weiss, Larry Shaffer (Town Manager), Charlie Moran (PWC)

Others presenting: Guilford Mooring (Director Public Works Department), Rob Kusner, Vincent O’Connor (PWC), Mike McCarthy, Steve Braun (PWC)

**Announcements**

LWV book drop off starts March 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Select Board’s actions**

Review Hadley’s 350<sup>th</sup> parade policy: We should put in a place holder application in their parade before April 3<sup>rd</sup> deadline.

**Applications for new taxi licenses:**

Mike McCarthy appeared before the Board;

Diana Stein moved to approve the new Taxi Driver License for Michael J. McCarthy, 35 Ledgewood Circle, Belchertown MA 01007. Gerry Weiss seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Jan F. Sobiech appeared before the Board;

Diana Stein moved to approve the new Taxi Driver License for Jan F. Sobiech, 29 Old Amherst Road, Sunderland, MA 01375. Gerry Weiss seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**Public Works Proposals:**

Guilford Mooring presented:

North Pleasant Sidewalk work – “Souper Bowl” block; This portion of last year’s project was delayed until parking could be resolved. Parallel parking is the final design. (Larry Shaffer described the problems with head in parking; traffic backing up through bike lane, not typical in Amherst and could be more dangerous.)

The work may start next week north of this plan to pick up where work left off last year.

Vincent O’Connor (PWC) noted that bump outs at the ends of parking improve pedestrian safety at cross walks. The bump out in this plan is not part of a crosswalk and it is not needed.

Rob Kusner wanted to check the distance between the parking places and the bike lane – one foot, as shown, is not enough room for opening car doors unless the stall is wider than 7’.

Guilford Mooring noted the layout is according to the Town standard, with a 7' stall and 1' buffer to the bike lane.

Diana Stein moved to approve the design concept for the "Food for Thought" Sidewalk on North Pleasant Street plan sheet #6 dated 11/6/08 contingent on the PTBC review of the bump out. Gerry Weiss seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Cottage Street parking changes: Guildofr Mooring presented the plan. This issue has been worked on since 2002. The abutters generally agree with the plan though not in every detail. The concern is that parking on both sides will impede emergency vehicles traveling on the road. The plan deals with three separate issues; impeding emergency vehicles when parking is on both sides, ARHS student and renters parking, and (UMass) commuter parking.

Diana Stein asked whether there was a public hearing on this. She noted that this has been an ongoing issue and we should put something in place as soon as possible.

Guilford Mooring explained that their meetings are open and advertised and that every abutter got a letter as the way they engaged the public.

Gerry Weiss moved to change vehicle parking on Cottage Street as follows:

No parking on the east side of Cottage Street starting from its intersection with Triangle Street to a point 620 feet north, and starting from the intersection with Chestnut Street to a point of 50 south.

No parking on the west side of Cottage Street starting from its intersection with Triangle Street to a point 320 feet north and starting from the intersection with Chestnut Street to a point 560 feet south.

The plan is to be reviewed June 30 2009.

Diana Stein seconded and the motion was accepted unanimously.

Approve Trench permit for the Town of Amherst. Guilford Mooring presented – the State has a new regulation requiring Towns to regulate trenching for public safety. It includes enforcement on private property.

Alisa Brewer would like to separate the motion into 2 pieces one making us the primary agent one for setting the fees. She didn't know if Town Meeting should make this rule (based on an old memo). What about regionalizing the enforcement of this requirement? In the future we can ask Town Meeting to establish a requirement for inspections.

Guilford Mooring read a communication from the Town Council that the Select Board can indeed adopt the rule. The system would be an extension of the current street opening permit system that is now in place for public ways to cover all trenches in Town.

Larry Shaffer noted that the permit information will be on the GIS system so Emergency Services can know the where they are. This proposal is our first attempt at establishing the rule and system for managing the permits. Mr. Shaffer will check into regionalization of the service.

Vince O'Connor wondered about emergency repair situations when a trench is needed at night. Mr. O'Connor also noted that this would come up most as part of a subdivision development. A copy of the bylaw initialed by contractor should be kept on site. Trenches are dangerous, does this rule include protecting the trench and that the work is being done safely?

Guildford Mooring replied that there is a provision for emergencies and there are rules about monitoring the trench while it is open and protecting it when there is no-one present. Now the DPW will be required to get an excavation permit so all the safety requirements including the presence of a competent person on site, will apply. For agricultural practice there is the standard agricultural exemption.

Alisa Brewer moved to designate the Department of Public Works as the Town of Amherst's primary agent responsible for the State require Trench Permit program under MGL 82A Sect 1 and 520 CMR 7.00. Diana Stein seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Alisa Brewer moved to set the new excavation fee to \$35.

Diana Stein seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Alisa Brewer moved to decrease the permit fees to the following levels:

Driveway permit - \$50  
Drainage permit - \$100  
Street opening permit – \$100

Diana Stein seconded.

Discussion: Guilford Mooring explained these fees are reduced to offset the additional trenching fee to encourage compliance which allows the Town to know what is going on. Larry Shaffer will be checking with compliance over the course of the year to see what the number of permits is. He hoped the number would go up.

Motion was accepted unanimously.

Consider supporting lobbying letter for Transportation Stimulus Fund: Guildford Mooring presented – the State gets Federal funds for highway money and distributes it. The same process is in place for the stimulus money but the PVJT is disappointed with how the funds are being distributed so far. The funding so far as gone to State highways and not Towns. State officials took the easy way by excluding municipalities. The PVJTC wanted to get a letter to the State to push for some of the money to come to the towns. The State bureaucracy slows the approval down and makes it hard to be “shovel ready” in 120 days – a requirement of the funding - which is how long approvals can take. Larry Shaffer would rather money comes through the usual Chapter 90 processes since the Chapter 90 process is fairer to Towns.

(Stephanie O’Keeffe reminded us that we are already on record for supporting this concept.)

Vincent O’Connor recommends our endorsement letter be copied to Stan Rosenberg and Ellen Storey as well as the House and Senate leadership since they can move the cause.

Guildford Mooring is simply looking for an endorsement letter of about paragraph to support the PVJTC’s lobbying.

Gerry Weiss moved that the Select Board endorse the PVJTC letter of March 18 to the Governor and other key people. Diana Stein 2<sup>nd</sup> and the motion passed unanimously.

Traffic Calming policy: The decision will be rescheduled. Guilford Mooring described the policy – there is a set of traffic calming devices on specific types of roads. Every road in Amherst has been identified as to type, and use classification (which is open to discussion). This list will guide DPW to the appropriate traffic calming

method. The intention is to use horizontal displacement as much as possible since it eases emergency vehicle response. For residential settings calming can include diverting traffic and mini circles.

Stephanie O’Keeffe noted the policy should be reviewed by the Public Works Committee so the SB will be working on a final draft and asked for the timeline for completing this policy?

Guilford Mooring explained this policy will go to Public Works Committee, Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee, and the Disabilities Access Advocacy Committee because it is a substantial change and needs to be carefully considered. It may be drafted for initial comments before school is out.

Alisa Brewer recommended the draft gets on the website for the widest possible distribution.

Rob Kusner hoped we would consider putting a readable draft up and invite comments to the Select Board directly. Mr. Kusner noted that many of our arterial roads are residential and crisscrossed by students and children and hoped we could consider them as residential first and arterial second.

Lincoln Avenue proposal: Mr. Mooring recalled that Lincoln Ave has been a problem for 30 years. A number of traffic counts and tests with speed cushions were made. The cushions made no difference on traffic counts but did reduce speed.

The Public Works Committee considered partial closures on Sunset and Lincoln which could be in place as a test this later Spring and counts could be made to determine the efficacy of the solution.

The Public Works Committee sent a letter that suggested it was not in favor of any of the proposed traffic calming solutions on Lincoln.

Charlie Moran (PWC) reported that the PWC did not vote on the partial closing but had earlier voted against making streets loop one way.

Steve Braun (PWC) noted that the PWC recommendations against partial closures was a recommendation against one-way looping. They also recommended speed cushions without a cut through. Mr. Braun thinks this is a good option.

The final proposal is for partial closures only, no speed cushions yet. This would be the first step to determine the need for also reducing speed.

Alisa Brewer would like to get this done as soon as possible.

Larry Shaffer has heard from others that the Lincoln and Sunset avenue neighborhoods are getting undue attention from this plan. He noted that the traffic on these roads, that is going to UMass, is reducing the quality of life in a neighborhood near downtown and there is a principled interest in protecting this neighborhood. It is unfair for a 26,000 student institution to run any portion of its traffic through a residential neighborhood.

Vincent O’Connor had a differing view from the PWC as a whole. He felt it would cause an impact on north Pleasant Street and traffic to the downtown businesses. Traffic barriers are a 24 hours solution to a limited problem. Mr. O’Connor would like to see a sign to keep people from starting down a street only to find a barrier at the end since it is likely they are going around the barrier rather than turning around.

Stephanie O’Keeffe felt the sense of the Select Board is to support this test.

Alisa Brewer noted that it is important to have all this in place before the students arrive in September so they can be notified of the traffic changes before they return.

Larry Shaffer reported that Keith Hoyle has commented on this plan and is OK with it as long as he can respond to the University quickly. He approves of the partial barriers rather than the full barriers.

Guilford Mooring gets a lot of feedback from the residents and from various blogs. For formal communication Mr. Mooring will put notices in the papers.

Alisa Brewer moved to authorize the DPW to install temporary partial closures as shown in Figure 9 of the Lincoln Avenue Neighborhood meeting report prior to September 2009.

Gerry Weiss seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

### **Committee appointments**

Diana Stein and Alisa Brewer met with Judith to start reviewing reappointment procedures and letter.

### **Town Manager's report**

Recent and upcoming activity;

Mr. Shaffer has been recruiting people for both chief search committees with some success including Wellesley's police chief and Northampton's Fire Chief.

Mr. Shaffer was delighted to welcome the 10 students from Kanagasaki Japan this week.

Mr. Shaffer dined with Isaac Ben Ezara who is in good spirits and progressing well and will be ready for Town Meeting.

Hampshire College's President Hexter won a dinner at a fund raising auction for the Men's Resource Center. The dinner was put on by Stan Rosenberg and Mr. Shaffer.

The award letter for the grant to study the regionalization of emergency services dispatch included some codicils by the State 911 Committee including allowing them to review the results and for us to try and increase the region. Mr. Shaffer has contacted Ware, South Hadley and Sunderland to ask if they were interested in participating.

The Town received only two responses to RFP for using old land fill, wood processing facility, and PV farm. The PV proposal was not complete and the wood processor isn't appropriate for this neighborhood so Mr. Shaffer rejected both and is starting again.

Mr. Shaffer met with non-union employees and Waste Water Treatment Plant employees to bring them up to date on the issues of the budget, possible solutions, get their ideas and to get their feedback. Mr. Shaffer will meet with them again in 8 weeks to update them when more is known. All solutions are on the table including reduction of the work force but everything is being done to avoid lay-offs. Mr. Shaffer is concerned about the stability of the organization that uncertainty threatens. Getting information out as soon as possible is the best way to deal with it. He will be meeting with all departments including all shifts of APD and AFD.

Diana Stein wondered if the meetings generated any good money saving ideas.

Mr. Shaffer replied that there were many energy conservation ideas.

(Mr. Weiss wondered if State Police will be used this Spring to help out with UMass crowds, Mr. Shaffer is working with the State to get manpower resources to help maintain an environment of safety.)

Economic Development Council meeting report, (Mr. Shaffer is a director on the EDC): In 2009 the number of people contacting EDC about developing sites had dropped off but recently the numbers are picking up again. This is an encouraging sign that EDC's efforts of promotion are working even in this austere environment.

Update on requested wage information: Mr. Shaffer can provide baseline data quickly but the more detailed benchmark data is not ready.

Budget questions can be submitted directly to Mr. Shaffer for distribution and answering – some answers will be quick and some will take time research. (Stephanie O'Keeffe reminded us that this process for asking questions was put in place to save time and give the Town Manager time to research an answer.)

The Town Website was recognized by Common Cause as a "Super Site" the highest commendation by Common Cause.

### **Member reports**

BCG update - Gerry Weiss reported that some of the stimulus money is making its way to Amherst. All the money so far has been earmarked for schools. There is more coming, its amount is unknown. Maybe a week from Saturday after the Council of Governments meeting there will be more data.

The meeting discussed the implementation of the FCCC's report especially the "Core Budget". Ranking budget items in the Core Budget proved difficult because of the wide variety of services.

The BCG agreed that the wage study needs to be done and it is OK for it to be complete as soon as possible after Town Meeting.

The BCG also felt we need bench marking to compare with other Towns. There is a State Department that makes these types of studies so there is a database for our benchmark to be compared against.

Updated Town Warrant Schedule – The BCG suggested that the first 27 articles will be heard before June 1<sup>st</sup> (if they are complete before June 1<sup>st</sup> TM could adjourn until June 1<sup>st</sup>). On June 1<sup>st</sup> Town Meeting will start considering the 9 articles contingent on the State budget. By then everything that will impact the FY 10 budget will be dealt with.

(Stephanie O'Keeffe noted that 2 extra nights were reserved in the Middle School for Town Meeting at the end of June just in case.)

Stephanie O'Keeffe added that the FCCC made the size of the budget gap very clear, it didn't help solve the problem directly but the discussion of the issues has been influential in their work.

JCPC update; Diana Stein reported that Peter Jessop, chair of the CPA, discussed the CPAC recommendations. This year the recommendations will be for \$663k leaving \$23k in the account. Projects included \$30k for Habitat, \$315k for historical preservation (Jones roof, North Congregational Church roof), open space got \$250k, Recreation is only the debt service for Plum Brook.

The JCPC then considered capital project requests: Historically they have been working toward a 5 year plan to get to 5% of tax levy for funding capital projects.

Annual Report update, Alisa Brewer reported data are being collected and forwarded.

K-6 Regionalization Study Comm. Alisa Brewer reported this committee won't meet in plenary until June 20<sup>th</sup> so homework can be completed to get comparison numbers on building and classroom. They will consider the implications of closing Mark's Meadow.

AmherstHousingAuthority.org has been launched and has lots of information for tenants current and future and about the Authority itself.

### **Chair's report –**

Stephanie O'Keeffe took part in the welcoming the Kanagasaki middle school students and their host families.

April 3<sup>rd</sup> the LWV is having their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration at the Amherst Women's club. They will mark the publication of "Your Amherst Government."

### **Liaison and representative reports**

The liaison policy statement is being reviewed by all and will be on the agenda.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn 9:19

### **Next meetings**

3/30 no meeting

3/31 Annual Town election

Council of Governments breakfast is April 4<sup>th</sup>, RSVP by April 1<sup>st</sup>

4/6 Regular meeting; Take positions on Warrant articles, choose Select Board representatives for Fire and Police chief search panels, any re-organization, reps to APD and AFD search committees

4/22 (Rescheduled Patriot's day mtg) in Community Room at APD, to review Town Meeting warrant articles

April meetings will be mostly on Warrant Articles. Agenda items need to be brought in as early as possible.

Comments and corrections are encouraged:

Respectfully submitted;

*Aaron Hayden*